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MODERN PORTRAITURE



décerné à

M^r DOONER (R.-T), de Philadelphie,

PAR

La Chambre Syndicale Française de
la Photographie et de ses
Applications



POUR SES EXCELLENTES PHOTOGRAPHIES
EXPOSÉES A LA CHAMBRE SYNDICALE EN L'ANNÉE
1910

Paris, le 15 Août 1910

LE PRÉSIDENT :

LES VICE-PRÉSIDENTS

LE SECRÉTAIRE :

Modern Portraiture

*"The natural progress of the works of men
is from rudeness to convenience, from con-
venience to elegance, and from elegance to
nicety."*—DR JOHNSON.

BY
RICHARD T. DOONER

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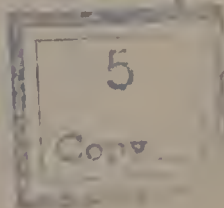
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PORTRAIT OF MISS FARIES

A very good example of a simple head study, retaining all the interest of a full figure composition by the simple handling of light and line.

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“A double task to picture the finest features of the mind, and to most subtle and mysterious things give color, strength and motion.”—Akenside

ART is the most difficult language to understand. As Hillard has aptly said: “Many persons feel art, some understand it; but few both feel and understand it.” Yet we find the general public firm in the belief that it can take liberties in directing the portraitist in ways that would not be thought of when dealing with the “masters” in other professions.

A patient would never dare suggest to his physician the proper prescription for his special malady, nor would a client attempt to dictate to his lawyer how to proceed with his case. Yet these same individuals will blandly dictate to a portraitist the exact procedure that they consider proper to procure the best portrait of themselves—selecting quite frequently a portrait of a friend which they consider quite the thing. As a matter of fact, the average man or woman is, in most cases, much better qualified to dictate to either his or her physician or attorney than to a portraitist; the fundamental principles of medicine and law being much more generally understood than those of portraiture.

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It is the purpose of this booklet to clear away some of the clouds that now befog the minds of most persons; to show what to seek and what to guard against in order to secure a truly strong portrait; to explain *why* the modern photographer, provided he is an artist, can produce portraits possessing all the individuality, charm and artistic merit of paintings by the great masters.

The portraitist must realize, as did all the old masters, that real portraiture is the record of human life, reflecting not only the *physical* but the *mental* attitude of individuals, and is influenced by every change that marks the course and character of human life.

Portraiture, *at its best*, is a most harmonious and dignified art. A true artist will not allow himself to be influenced by the erroneous beliefs or ideas of a patron but will endeavor to make such a patron desire the best that the artist's knowledge can give him.

Photography is not a fine art just as *paint*, *clay* or *marble* are not (of themselves) fine arts. But there is fine art *in* photography, paint, clay or marble. It is the *use* of any of these mediums, not the mediums themselves, that is all important. One frequently hears the expression applied to a fine photograph; "*Why! that looks just like a portrait*"—the speaker inferring that the only medium of portraiture is *paint*. Due to traditional acceptance of this idea, one of the most



IN THE STUDIO

In this picture the eye can wander around, taking in every detail, yet will always return with a restful feeling to the first and secondary points of interest.

difficult barriers to be overcome by the modern portrait photographer is that the public fails to understand that the true artist can, through photography, rival the artist whose medium is paint.

For the transmission of thought one medium is as apt as another. The really essential thing is that the portraitist be so thoroughly the master of his technique that his whole attention may be concentrated on the study of the sitter. Other things being equal, the lens has the advantage of speed and accuracy in drawing. This permits absolute absorption of the artist's mind on his study of the sitter.

To fully understand the development of photographic portraiture to its present artistic possibilities one must study the history of other fine arts and note how closely the lines leading to perfection parallel one another.

We find, for example, that the infancy of all forms of art has been idealism, regardless of *truth* or *character*. In going back over the history of Portrait-Art we find in the very early stages of portraiture the statue of "Perikles" by Kresilas. At this period, Fifth Century B.C., there was no attempt at individual portraiture. The traditions of Greek beauty forbade anything but the idealistic statue (except, in representing a different sphere of life, we find the sway of elemental passions as represented in a centaur). Therefore we find the

noble character of Perikles represented much the same as many other men of his station; differing only, as Pliny says, "as the artist made noble men still more noble." In the centaur the artist accentuated the unlovely forms as factors in the expression of *individuality*. This was turned to admirable account in later portraits.

At that time, however, in creating images of great personages, the only clue the portraitist gave to the individuality of the personage is marked by the head-gear or robes denoting his station in life. There was absolutely no attempt to portray *character* or the *individuality* of the subject, only to create an image of an ideal man.

The first true portraitists in Sculpture were Demetrios of Alopeke, and Dionysios, who lived in the Fifth Century B.C. It was at the close of this century that Portrait-Art passed from the tradition of the typically beautiful to a representation of the individually characteristic; the momentary and the ugly in the human form *to express the activity of the human soul*, and, so beauty and proportion no longer remained the highest ideal.

We find this same condition existing some centuries later when Michael Angelo produced his wonderful contributions to the world in the forms of ideal men.

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It was not until the time of Holbein, (1497-1543), Rembrandt, (1607-1669) and Velasquez (1599-1660) that we really began to get anything that represented some particular individual without any attempt to idealize.



MR. DOONER

*has been awarded
Certificate of Merit by*

Pennsylvania Salon	1898
Paris Salon	1900
Paris Salon	1902
Linked Ring, London	1903
Dresden (Gold Medal)	1908
Paris Salon	1908
Budapest Salon	1909
London Salon	1910
Pittsburgh Salon	1912
Middle Atlantic States	1916
Pittsburgh Salon	1916
Middle Atlantic States	1917
Pittsburgh Salon	1917
Middle Atlantic States	1918
Pittsburgh Salon	1918
Pittsburgh Salon	1919
Middle Atlantic States	1919
National	1920
Pittsburgh	1921
Buffalo	1921




THE DANCER

Illustrating two very strong elements in composition. First the figure "8" giving rhythm, supported by the two vertical lines suggesting great height, in conjunction with the figure placed low in the picture. The hand and shadow reaching away back in the picture gives the third dimension.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

“The painter who is content with the praise of the world in respect to what does not satisfy himself is not an artist, but an artisan; for though his reward be only praise, his pay is that of a mechanic.”—Washington Allston

HE earliest photographs were produced in 1839. It is not strange, therefore, that photography (still in its infancy) has only recently progressed beyond the effort to secure an exact reproduction of *physical* characteristics.

This explains why the possibilities for individual expression in photography is so little understood; why, as in the early days of painting and sculpture, we find the general public flocking to the *artisans* who produce marble finished images instead of portraits of men and women of flesh and blood and distinct individuality.

At the present time—due, no doubt, to the late war which has caused such a state of decadence in all arts—photography has (considering the average work from a truly artistic standpoint) lapsed back ten or fifteen years.

There was a tendency in the period of 1900-1910 for photographers to express themselves individually and about that time it was an easy matter to select the work of the leading men in the country by their individual

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handling. But now, if the work of many of these men was put on a wall together, it would all be sadly alike in the marble finish of their expressionless images. An analysis of the situation forces one to the conclusion that they have been caught in the tide of commercialism; have become mere "operators" who, for a fee, turn out the same stereotyped work—after a given formula—that the general public has been taught to accept as the standard.

The criticism to which photography is often subjected is based largely on what the camera will do if left to "its own sweet will," which is comparable to Wagner's Fire music played by the hurdy-gurdy. If one will readjust these conditions and place Paderewski at the piano playing the "Ride of the Valkyries" and a real student of Portraiture in command of a camera, the results will again be comparable. Another comparison might be made, if the judgment was by an unbiased mind, by taking a portrait *painted* by a recognized portrait painter and a portrait *made by photography* of the same subject by an equally able portrait-photographer and comparing them closely. It would then be clearly seen that it is not the *medium*, but the *conception*, that makes a portrait a work of art.

The distinctive quality and character of photography is the manner in which the photographer draws with

light and shade. When handled by an artist, photography produces line or tone at will. In the instance of the "gum" process, for example, the photographer is working step by step as the etcher producing his Mezzo tints. He has the added advantage of being able to multiply his color to the same surface to any degree that he desires and this process leaves the print at all times to his control to eliminate or add to at will, and picture what is *felt* as well as what is *seen*.

Most people would like to have good portraits of the members of the family, but few people care to spend the time and money necessary in having such portraits *painted* by an artist of acknowledged talent. Nor is it necessary that they do this. A successful and satisfying portrait does not necessarily have to be painted. The camera, when directed by one having the ability to see all that is fine and essential in portraiture, has even greater possibilities than the brush. The moods and expressions that tell the story of a *personality* are fleeting and the work by the modern Portraitist using the camera can more adequately seize the essential qualities than the great master handicapped by the slow process of the brush.

It is not my belief that photographic portraiture will ever entirely supplant portrait painting. But I do believe that the time is not far distant when all persons

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of discriminating tastes will insist on the work of either a master painter or a true artist expressing himself through the medium of photography. In painting there will always exist the chromo factory and there will always be a demand for the highest type of portrait painters. In the photographic field there is a place for the post card studio and the individualist whose aim is a serious study of portraiture. But the quasi-artist, whose work is neither inexpensive nor individual, will cease to exist when the public is taught to distinguish between what is real and what is merely a gaudy imitation.





FORTRAIT OF PROFESSOR SCHELLING

In this study, the hands (which have such tremendous character that, even portrayed alone, they would be a portrait study in themselves) are held in a semi-low key, to keep them of less importance than the expression of the eyes and mouth; yet they are not subordinated to the powerful lines of the gown.

THE ARTIST vs. THE ARTISAN

“Whatever may be the means, or whatever the more immediate end of any kind of art, all of it that is good agrees in this, that is the expression of one soul talking to another, and is precious according to the greatness of the soul that utters it.”—Ruskin

PORTRAIT-PHOTOGRAPHY can be divided into two classes: The first class is that produced by the really serious portraitist, who should be judged by his results in portraiture, regardless of his business location. This class is bound by neither methods nor mannerisms, nor kinds of material. The sole object of the man in it is to produce a portrait in whatever way best suits his purpose and he is primarily concerned in the study of human nature. He has mastered his technique to a degree that enables him to forget it. It seldom occurs to him whether his sitter is clad in satins and fine laces or materials of a very inferior quality. These things are merely textures in relation to his flesh tones, to be thought of subordinately as part of his composition. His chief concern lies in the study of light and shade with which he draws his portrait. If he is not the absolute master in the handling of light his chances as a portraitist are small indeed.

I have watched the play of light and shade on a

man's face change it from the most intimate individual portrait to one that I would hardly recognize as the same person. It is therefore necessary that the portraitist study the features of the sitter very minutely for the play of individual characteristics of line and contour and then select the lighting that will accentuate the most dominating characteristics and subdue those that are not desirable.

It is my opinion that the modeling of the face should be controlled as nearly as possible in the handling of the light rather than by retouching the negative afterwards, though I by no means agree with the opinions that the negative should never be touched with a pencil. The retouching pencil is a very useful tool in proper hands. I also believe that the etching knife can be used to great advantage in this art when handled by a skilled draftsman.

I contend, however, in the case of serious portraiture, that *the negative should never be touched by anyone but the portraitist who made it*. The idea of a photographer claiming to make really serious portraits, who, after making his negative, hands it over to a hireling retoucher (who has neither a conception of the person nor an idea as to what the portraitist's intention was in producing a certain subtle effect), is absurd.

UNTER DEM ALLERHÖCHSTEN PROTEKTORAT
SEINER MAJESTÄT DES KÖNIGS FRIEDRICH
AUGUST VON SACHSEN
INTERNATIONALE
PHOTOGRAPHISCHE AUSSTELLUNG DRESDEN
MCMIX

ES WIRD HIERMIT BEURKUNDET / DASS DAS
PREISGERICHT DER

KOLLEKTIV-AUSSTELLUNG DER AMERI-
KANISCHEN BERUFS⁵PHOTOGRAPHEN
MIT *Herrn R. L. Döner, Philadelphia* ALS TEILNEHMER
FÜR HERVORRAGENDE LEISTUNGEN AUF DEM
GEBIETE DER KÜNSTLERISCHEN PHOTOGRAPHIE

DIE GOLDENE MEDAILLE
ZUERKANNT HAT. / DRESDEN, DEZB. MCMIX
DAS AUSSTELLUNGS-DIREKTORIUM

I. VORSITZENDER

V. J. J. J. J.

I. SCHRIFTFÜHRER

Dr. K. K. K.



Men who follow this “quantity production” method comprise the second group mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter. To those not knowing how to distinguish between the real and the imitation, the work of this class is frequently sold as “serious character portraiture”. The method employed for the sake of gain by this class is as comparable as it would be for a portrait painter to make a preliminary sketch, hand it over to his apprentice to make a finished painting, then sign it as his individual work.

When a photographic studio becomes a work-shop of many trained hands or artisans under the direction of an artist (real or false) the work going out over his signature is not that of an individual portraitist nor the work of a master who never loses sight of his creation from its incipency to completion. To quote Bulwer-Lytton on this subject:

“The first essential to success in the art you practice is respect for the art itself.”

Such respect is certainly lacking where individuality and character are sacrificed to the god of bulk production. When the portraitist becomes a mannerist to such a degree that he makes each individual look the product of a certain studio, so that it is almost necessary to consult the records in order to identify the portrait, the true *portrait quality* has been lost. A first essen-

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tial to the highest portraiture is a sincere rendering of individuality.

It is the duty of a true portraitist to render the essential dignity of the human face and figure. Violent gestures, strained attitudes, forced expressions are avoided by the portraitist who uses the proper restraint. A portrait is not an exhibition of technique, nor of skill, nor of masterly handling of any one medium, but it is interpretive representation of an individual personality. Only one possessing the necessary vision can see beneath the veil and bring forth, through the mask of human flesh and mental reserve, that which is beautiful but is hidden from the eyes of those who are not in sympathy nor accord with its existence.

This explains why one of the greatest factors in portraiture is absolute concentration of the portraitist on his sitter. It brings to mind a saying of one of my old instructors, Mr. Thomas P. Anshutz, at the Academy of Fine Arts: "*Learn your technique so well that you can forget it.*" This is no less true in regard to portraits by photography than in painting, for the photographer who has to stop to consider his *technique* cannot possibly put the necessary concentration into his *portrait*.

In contrasting the painted portrait and the portrait of photography, the painter is so absorbed in his work

that he may continue for hours without even wishing to enter into conversation with his sitter. As a result he may fail to realize that a bored and hopeless expression is slowly but surely creeping over his subject, who is sitting idly by while he has been absorbed in his work to the extent of almost forgetting that his subject is a living being. On the other hand, the portrait-photographer, having made his arrangements and spaced his canvas, can concentrate his entire energy on conversation so that *interest* will bring forth the quality of expression that is to be portrayed and work it up to the pinnacle. Then—in a fraction of a second—this expression is secured and held for all time.





PORTRAIT OF MISS MARY BURNHAM AND FATHER

A happy combination of good spacing, well placed spots and ample room back and around the figures, without losing the point of interest and the portrait quality.

THE DISEASE OF "MANNERISM"

"Art does not imitate, but interprets."—Mazzini

ONE of the greatest pitfalls to be avoided in the practice of portraiture is mannerism, which seems to be a disease that is very contagious among photographers of the present day. The so-called "popular" studio manager will look at the work of a portraitist who is really striving toward the perfection of his art and see a picture with a "back light." This he will immediately accept as a standard and everything he makes for that period will be made with a back light—no consideration apparently being given to the fact that the back light he saw was used to interpret some *individuality*.

This same "manager" will next be attracted by something the real artist has made in a "low key." He will immediately start to make *all* his pictures printed very dark and imagine that he has accomplished the same thing that a master when the latter *purposely* worked in a low key from the inception to the completion of a particular portrait in order to produce certain gradations of tone that are particularly and only adaptable to the individual being portrayed. The imitator, having absolutely no idea of the individual portrayed, merely considers this a style and mannerism practiced by a

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master and therefore something to be followed on all occasions.

It is only the keen perception of the true portraitist that is able to separate the subtle differences between the individual characteristics and the general style of modern times. It is the task of the portraitist to portray beauty without beautiful forms. Ugly forms sometimes have an unsuspected wealth of expressive power. An interesting shadow can be made to redeem nature's cruelest facts and with the poetry of light, the commonplace can be made beautiful by losing into the shadow what is undesirable and bringing into relief the features and individual lines that best depict the one portrayed. Play of light and shade and a certain play of line will go far to redeem the ever faithful portrayal of a homely personality. A fine feeling for grace of line will give a sense of beauty to any subject, but this alone will not produce a portrait. The modern conception of portraiture is a picture which depends for its *interest* on the likeness of the individual.

The great advance in the resources of light and a realization of the value of shadow is opening greater possibilities to the camera-portraitist with every subject that he studies. It used to be the whole conception of a portrait was to show everything as far as possible in a full light, (there are some newspaper publishers



PORTRAIT OF MRS. GEORGE JUSTICE AND CHILDREN

A difficult problem in composition, because there are three portraits to consider. Here the point of interest emanates from the mother to the child on the grass, the boy being held within the circle by actual contact.

who still want to insist on this) and the "lost and found," the power of an obscure shadow, still has no charm for such as these.

There is more art in "restraint" sometimes than there is in full portrayal. This is readily seen through a study of portraits painted by Whistler, who, according to Pennell:

"Made no effort to reform, to improve upon Nature, only reserving to himself his right to *select* the elements in it that were beautiful and could be brought together, as the notes in music, to create harmony."

In fact, *restraint* is the key to a wealth of possibilities to the painter or camera-portraitist. The lens used by the latter will give all, and more than all, that the human eye can see *without discrimination*. It is the *mind* of the one using the lens and his vision of his subject that makes possible the *elimination* of all the *unessentials*—that concentrates attention on the important things by qualities of light and shade, line and composition.

The summary possibilities of the portrait by photography is greater than by any other means because the subtle and fleeting *expressions* can be caught by a specialist in modern portraiture. When portrait work can be done with this rapidity and ease there is consequently a greater mastery obtained. The facility of

preliminary sketches in portrait photography make possible the incomparable results of the final supreme effort, achieved without the fatigue which degenerates into carelessness.

As Ruskin has said, "all really great pictures exhibit the general habits of nature, manifested in some peculiar, rare and beautiful way." In order to portray the rare, the beautiful or the distinctive quality, however, one can scarcely ever accept nature in its *entirety*. Therefore, the artist turns to composition, the control of light and shade and tonal values to accomplish by artifice what is impossible or undesirable to reproduce literally. The photographer who relies on the straight photograph without any modifications to interpret his impression is merely guiding a machine and therefore will reproduce nothing except what the machine will do for anyone having the knowledge to operate it. It is here that the vision and imagination of the master portraitist differs from the work of the mere artisan.

The foundation of a picture is good composition. "The artist," said Whistler, "is born to pick and choose, and group with science, the elements contained in nature that the result may be beautiful." An otherwise very fine portrait may be an utter failure because of a faulty composition. The difficulties of composition

occur frequently in the three-quarter length portrait, where the composition is usually, what might be termed, "L" shaped; the head occupying one of the upper corners and the hands or hand the opposite corner. Here it is the artist's task to fill the empty space opposite the head with interest that will arrest the eye but at the same time *lead* the eye toward the head.

Take, for example, the illustration opposite page 35, "Portrait of Joseph Pennell." In this case I have used a "back light" in order to give me the *drawing* and the individual character and modeling of the head. I have utilized the same light to give *space* and *form* to the background in order to fill with necessary (but controlled) interest what would otherwise have been a blank uninteresting spot in the "L" shaped composition.

Again, in the portrait of Mr. Wm. R. Breck, reproduced opposite page 43, the "L" shaped composition is balanced by the use of a "back light," but the treatment is totally different. This picture may be divided into any given divisions without the slightest loss of interest in the head, or, as a whole, every inch of the canvas holds together and has a meaning.

Still another phase in composition may be illustrated by "The Dancer." Here (opposite page 13) we have two very strong elements in composition. First the figure "8" giving rhythm supported by the two vertical lines

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suggesting great height in conjunction with the figure placed low in the picture. The hand and shadow reaching away back in the picture gives the third dimension. The sparkle of the costume is foiled by the simplicity of the background, giving strength again to the rhythm and pattern of the whole picture.

The problems of painters and photographers differ, as the photographer must necessarily sum up his composition as a whole, figuratively speaking, at a glance; whereas the painter may tentatively conceive his whole composition and by gradual stages eliminate or add to it at his will. From this it will be seen that the photographer's problem is one that requires much keener perception.






MY WIFE

This portrait was made in a space that was only suitable in size to achieve a head study; yet, by careful arrangement of the spacing, all in one plane, there is no distortion or lack of space felt.

DETAIL OR INTEREST?

“The only kind of sublimity which a painter or sculptor should aim at is to express by certain proportions and positions of limbs and features that strength and dignity of mind and vigor and activity of body, which enables men to conceive and execute great action.”—Burke

HE question of detail is one of great controversy and is often times confused with interest. A picture may be full of interest in every inch of the picture and yet not have any disturbing detail. On the other hand, a picture may be so full of detail that it absolutely loses all absorbing interest. Or, a picture may be full of detail so perfectly controlled that nothing disturbing arrests the eye. The picture that is well arranged will have its point of interest so dominating that all other objects in the picture serve only to lead to the interest of the main thought and result in a harmonious arrangement of the whole. It is within the painter's power to overlook any disturbing detail, but the photographer must either remove it before he makes the picture or *suppress* it afterwards.

Take for example the arrangement of “In the Studio,” reproduced opposite page 9. Here we have a picture that is covered in every inch with *interest*. The eye can wander around, taking in every detail, yet will always

return with restful feeling to the first and secondary points of interest. And, in wandering about, one's eyes will never receive a jolt as would be the case if any details were insubordinate or so sharp in outline that the edges would arrest the eye with a jolt and detract from the principal interest.

Photographers are constantly being called upon to break down the traditions in photography that a photograph, in order to be good, must show the grain of the skin and each eyelash and the weave of the cloth and the entire silhouette of the figure separated from the background. And, amazingly enough, this ignorance is not confined to the uncultured but will be met with even among intellectual people. These people do not stop to consider that when looking at one's friends one does not see the grain of the skin, nor the weave of the garments they wear, and, if they did, they would not see the *person*. They also overlook the very important fact that the great charm in the beautiful arrangements that we see in the course of our daily life is almost entirely due to the "lost and found" quality, or, in other words, to the way that light and shade and atmosphere actually present objects to our physical eye. It is the mysterious quality of envelopment and feeling of space and atmosphere that can make the most prosaic objects interesting. It is in

the power of the real artist to take the most commonplace and give it dignity and interest. But he who attempts the slavish rendering of every detail merely makes everything commonplace and monotonous. What I mean is well illustrated in the words of O. W. Holmes:

“The one thing that marks the true artist is a clear perception and a firm, bold hand in distinction from that imperfect mental vision and uncertain touch which gives us the feeble pictures and the lumpy statues of the mere artisan.”

If one would study portraiture for the pure joy that comes through appreciation of it, one would hear less often the expression “I don’t know a thing about art but I know what I like.” One who makes such an assertion admits that he does not know, nor does he care to develop the appreciation that brings with it an everlasting joy. The small investment of time spent in acquiring an appreciation of the beautiful or interesting adds a perpetual dividend of ever increasing pleasure. There are many men who are rich in financial resources but poverty stricken in appreciation. Is it not better that one should have a wealth of appreciation of the beautiful, that he can enjoy at all times, rather than the wealth of the universe and no love of beauty?

A real portrait (revealing the individuality and character of the sitter) provides a family record that will

be treasured and enjoyed. The task of the portraitist is to find the beautiful within the individual; the character beneath the mask. For there is something beautiful or interesting beneath the surface of the most commonplace individual. The serious portraitist seeks this subtle quality and brings it into his portrait with a firm, bold hand.

The portrait records of Velasquez, not only of his patron, Philip IV, but of the dwarfs and idiots of the court, are valuable contributions to history—depicting far more forcibly than words the life of the court. Records by modern portrait photography will be just as valuable to our future generations. Portraiture is a message of history told more forcibly than text.

The study of portraiture is the study of human nature. It is the duty of the portraitist to gather and bring to the surface all that is best in men and fix it for all time for the joy of mankind. And all men have within them the capacity of such enjoyment, if they will only open their minds to the beautiful.

But, before the general public can be taught to distinguish between the good and the bad, the true and the false, in photography portraiture, more of the workers in the field of photography must themselves master the fundamental principles of the art.

The principle of *repetition*, for example, is one that

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AWARDED TO

R. C. Dooner

BY

The Photographer's Association
of the Middle Atlantic States

for his excellent photograph exhibited of the

First Annual Convention
Washington, D. C.

and selected for the Permanent Salon.

Judges

President Judge
H. B. Sharffen
E. My. S. Delaunoy

Will H. Fowler President
J. F. Sherman Secretary

is little understood and much abused, by the quasi-portraitist. In most cases he has heard that he must have spots in his composition repeated. For instance, where the background and general drapery of the picture is dark the head, being the light and dominating spot, must be supported by one or more spots leading in or out of the picture. The most difficult arrangement of this kind is where the head and shoulders fill the entire space. The introduction of local and stronger lights is the solution of this problem and one that requires a great deal of study, for it is a solution that either solves the difficulty properly or destroys the portrait, for (improperly handled) these local lights make grotesque the natural character of the sitter. In the case of a light background, particularly in the portrait of a woman or child, the problem is not nearly so difficult, as the introduction of a gray shadow or a brilliant spot of light will almost always solve the difficulty, if it is handled with knowledge.

Examine the portrait of Miss Faries opposite page 7. Here we have a very good example of a simple head study retaining all the interest of a full figure composition by the simple handling of light and line, rendering the entire space full of interest with only a suggestion of detail.



PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH PENNELL

Illustrating the use of a "back light" to get the drawing and the individual character and modeling of the head.

PORTRAYERS OF CHARACTER

"The object of art is to crystallize emotion into thought, and then fix it in form."

—Francois Delsarte



IT IS my theory that the hands are the third most important factor in the portrait, and, as a portrayer of character, should be only less important than the eyes and mouth. In portraying the hands we find again a decided advantage in favor of photography over other mediums. The expression of a hand is often ruined in composition by the moving of one finger, yet it is often necessary for a painter to work for hours on one hand alone and one may readily understand the difficulty of keeping a hand posed for such a length of time.

To my mind it is a much easier problem to re-pose a head than it is to re-pose a hand, as I know that I have many times worked much harder in the composition of hands than I have ever worked over the direction or tilt of a head, which latter I often control more or less by the direction of my light—particularly since we have artificial light which can be controlled at will and moved about and around the sitter instead of having to request the sitter to move to suit the light.

But, to get back to the hands, there are so many elements that enter into this problem that the hands will always require the portraitist's careful attention. They must be considered from the standpoint of the character of the sitter and be made use of in a way to best express that character; they must be considered from the standpoint of the tonal value, or spots required in the composition of each particular portrait arrangement.

In short, the hands may make or mar the entire composition. But the advantage of the portrait by photography in this respect cannot be over-estimated for once the sitter is arranged there is not the strain of keeping the subject for hours in the same position.

In the case of the three-quarter figure the hands are always the most useful adjunct. If the photographer has the proper knowledge of the relation of his lens focal length to his composition, the question of hands in this case is comparatively easily handled. But, to go back to a former statement, none of this knowledge will be of any avail in portraiture unless it has become second nature and the portraitist uses it unconsciously, which, of course, can only be accomplished after years of study and constant application. Michael Angelo once said: "Art is a jealous thing; it requires the whole and entire man." And the student of photography

quickly finds how true this is when attempting to master the art of photographic portraiture.

In the portrait of Mrs. La Boiteaux opposite page 39, we have an example of character portrayed by the hands; the left hand languidly resting on the back of the chair depicting grace and charm, while the firmness and strength of character is clearly portrayed in the way the right hand holds the book. Note also that, while in this portrait there is a decided rhythm of line and repetition of interesting spots, all subordinate to the essential portrait quality of the head and hands.

It is an erroneous belief of some working in portraiture that it is necessary to introduce some object into the composition that will indicate the calling or profession of the sitter. This is a very cheap means of description and a theory that can by no means be carried out in all cases. One may be able to portray a musician with his instrument, or an artist with his palette at his easel and, in either of these cases, the composition may be enhanced by the introduction of such objects into the picture. But it by no means strengthens the portrait of a banker to be surrounded by currency, nor of a surgeon to place him amidst his instruments, lance in hand, etc., nor a lawyer orating before a crowded courtroom.

In the portrait of Professor Schelling, opposite page 17, the note sheet in his hand is introduced merely for the purpose of attracting some attention to the hands, which have such tremendous character that even portrayed alone they would be a portrait study in themselves. In this study they are held in a semi-low key to keep them only of less importance than the expression of the eyes and mouth and the dignity and strength of the head; yet they are not subordinate to the powerful lines of the gown.

Compare these hands with those in the portrait of Mrs. La Boiteaux. This illustrates the futility of any formula for composition that can be applied to two cases alike. Apparently the hands are doing practically the same thing. Yet analysis shows that in the case of the portrait of Mrs. La Boiteaux the charm lies in the grace of the relaxed hand, whereas in the Schelling portrait the texture and construction and intellectual force of the hand that rests on the chair made it an essential part of this portrait.





PORTRAIT OF MRS. LABOITEAUX

An example of how character may be portrayed by the hands; the left hand languidly resting on the back of the chair, depicting grace and charm, while the firmness and strength of character is clearly portrayed in the way the right hand holds the book.

BENEATH THE MASK

“In portraits, the grace, and, we may add, the likeness, consists more in taking the general air than in observing the exact similitude of every feature.”—Sir Joshua Reynolds

PORTRAITS of the same person may differ very widely, though executed by equally able masters. One, being in complete accord with the sitter, will give all that is best of the spirit of the man. The other, being mentally out of tune with his subject, merely maps the surface never being able to remove the mask. If he does succeed in getting a *portrait* under these circumstances, it is nothing more than a lucky accident.

The great difficulty with the average worker attempting a composition lies in the fact that he imitates only the *surface* that he sees in other men's work and thus fails utterly in his creation. This is due, of course, to the fact that he does not even *understand* the language of the work he endeavors to imitate. Had he understood, he would adapt the principles to his own conception. This type of mind will imitate the particular composition of an old master, which it seems fully confident it understands, arranging all their subjects and compositions according to this accepted ideal—never for a minute questioning the adaptability to its

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own individual case. The result is drab, characterless, parrot-like imitations, absolutely void of the subtle charm that marks true creative work.

It is unfortunately true that even the most highly educated persons will carelessly accept these superficial imitations and are deceived by them, forgetting that, as Tuckerman has so aptly said, "A work of art is perfect in proportion as it does not remind the spectator of the process by which it was created."

It is equally unfortunate, from the standpoint of the serious workers who are striving to lift the work of photographic portraiture to its proper plane, that *composition* cannot be taught by laying down any set rules. For, as a matter of fact, composition is nothing more or less than the realization and appreciation of the fitness of things.

However, if one will keep one idea in mind when studying or passing judgment on a composition, all the complexities can be very easily simplified. Just ask yourself this question:

"Does this or that detail lend to, build up, or detract from the main structure?"

If preparing to produce a photographic portrait, ask yourself, first of all, the frank question, "Am I perfectly sure of my composition?" If so, then build it up step by step, keeping only in mind the essentials of the

composition that are significant to the arrangement in mind and discard the encumbrances.

The portrait of "My Wife," shown opposite page 27, is a pure example of what one may accomplish under very trying circumstances when one has the tenacity to attempt the apparently impossible.

This portrait was made in a space that was only suitable in size to achieve a head study. Yet, by careful arrangement of the spacing all in one plane, so as to preserve the correct drawing, there is no distortion nor lack of space felt—even to the curtain, which gives no crowded appearance, yet it hid a wall immediately back of the figure.

The *group* is also a subject that always presents a problem to both painter and photographer, and there are no two problems exactly alike in the matter of groups. In the group of Miss Mary Burnham and her Father (opposite page 23), for example, is one of the happy combinations where I have been able to combine good spacing, well placed spots and ample room back and around the figures without losing the point of interest and the portrait quality.

The group of Mrs. Geo. Justice and her children (opposite page 25), presented a vastly different problem. Here I had three portraits to consider—with the dog thrown in for good measure. And, with all due respect

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to the dog, he saved my composition by giving me the necessary link to connect the figure of the child on the grass with the mother and boy. Here we had the point of interest emanating from the mother to the child on the grass, the boy being held within the circle by actual contact.





PORTRAIT OF WM. R. BRECK

This picture may be divided into any given division, without the slightest loss of interest in the head; or, as a whole, every inch of the canvas holds together and has a meaning.

CONCLUSION

“The study of art is a task at once engrossing and unselfish, which may be indulged without effort, and yet has the power of exciting the deepest emotions—a taste able to exercise and to gratify both the nobler and softer parts of our nature.”—Guizot

IN SUMMING up the essential points that, in my opinion, will be of greatest value and interest to those seriously interested in modern portraiture and its artistic possibilities, it will be necessary to draw largely on methods and policies which have been developed in my own studio. I trust, however, to be acquitted of egotism in this connection by all readers of this booklet if the effort throws new light on the subject.

The method I have found best suited in arriving at a successful portrait is to make a preliminary sitting of the subject, using various arrangements and finally selecting the one that, in my opinion, is best adapted to express my conception. After consulting my sitter's preference I use, what might be termed, by a painter, these preliminary sketches and proceed to produce my portrait by making as many negatives following the accepted arrangement as are necessary to get my sitter so completely unmasked that I am able to register the subtle beauty of expression *wherein he or she differs from any other individual*. Then I select the medium

in photography that best expresses my idea and meets the peculiar characteristics or requirements of each subject. That is to say, I do not confine myself to the use of any particular line of "accepted" photographic paper or finishes featured by the regular run of photographers as a selling point for otherwise ordinary photographs.

I endeavor by legitimate means to accentuate all the good I can find in my sitter and to eliminate whatever is unpleasant whenever not essential to the portrayal of the sitter's personality. By legitimate means I mean the control of light and shade to bring out or eliminate what I wish; both by control of accessories and arrangement and by control of expression.

My policy is to give the public what it wants *after I have made it want the best I have to give*. Mechanical retouching, such as is practiced in the usual studio, has absolutely no place in my work. The public may think that it wants to be flattered by such means, but it is only because knowledge is lacking that there is any higher means.

I work with the idea and ideal that my portraits must describe real people, not polished surface images. I believe that every sitter has a right to expect an artist to portray his most pleasing personal characteristics in the most favorable possible manner.

Most portrait painters lose their first vital impression by their anxiety over technique which then becomes so labored by repeated efforts that all freshness of the first and true impression is almost, if not entirely lost. Whistler, alone, of all the portrait painters, deemed it necessary that a portrait must be finally arrived at through one supreme effort after thorough study of his subject through many preliminary arrangements.

I do not subscribe to idealization at the sacrifice of individuality of character. I wish to portray what a man's habits, thoughts and feelings have made him at his best; not what his soul may possibly achieve. My object is not to put myself in my portraits through any *mannerism*, but to make each sitter live in his or her own individual way through my medium.

When I have a subject before me that I realize is going to be a difficult one to handle, both from the point of composition and expression—with probably a goodly portion of self-imposed ideas and fixed prejudices thrown in—I will work for my composition in the first sitting and may not even attempt to get anything except my general arrangement. The proofs may never be shown to the subject. In these cases I insist upon having a resitting, whereupon I start with the composition and arrangement that I have selected from the first sitting. By this method I do not tire my subject

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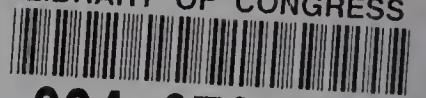
and am able to devote my attention entirely to expression, which I do with all possible speed. It may take time, care and much skill to handle such a subject in order to catch the necessary mood. "Men habitually wear a mask" is an old saying that the portraitist can certify as being true. And it is his task to remove the mask and show in his finished product the best qualities that lie beneath it.

It is my belief that unless a feeling of sympathy and confidence can be created between the sitter and the portraitist a good portrait will never be accomplished. Without this bond of understanding being established, a portrait cannot be produced that will pass the test of true merit which Beecher outlines in the following words:

"The first merit of pictures is the effect which they can produce upon the *mind*, and the first step of a sensible man should be to receive *involuntary* effects from them. Pleasure and inspection first, analysis afterward."



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